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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, March 12, 2015**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Dean Allison**



## Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Thursday, March 12, 2015

• (1145)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) we continue our study on the protection of children and youth in developing countries. We'll get started.

I just want to introduce our guests from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. We have Julie Shouldice, who is the director of education, child protection and gender equality. Welcome. We're glad to have you here today again.

Of course, I think we all know Leslie Norton, who has been here once or twice over the last little while.

**A voice:** She's an honorary member of the committee.

**The Chair:** We're going to have a motion on that to see if we can get her in there.

Ms. Norton is the director general of international humanitarian assistance. Welcome, Ms. Norton. We're glad to have you here.

Delivering the remarks today we have Diane Jacovella, who is assistant deputy minister for global issues and development. It's great to have you here.

Last but not least, joining us is Rachael Bedlington, who is director human rights and indigenous affairs policy division.

Joining us via video conference from New York we have our ambassador, Guillermo Rishchynski, who is permanent representative of Canada to the United Nations. Welcome, Ambassador. I don't believe you have an opening statement, but you're certainly here to answer any questions we may have, so we're really glad to have you.

I'm sorry we were delayed by votes, which happen from time to time. I'm going to get started right away.

We'll turn it over to you, Ms. Jacovella, and we'll have your opening statement and then we'll go round the room with questions.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella (Assistant Deputy Minister, Global Issues and Development, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will start my presentation in French and then move to English.  
[Translation]

Good morning.

Thank you for the invitation to speak to you today about the protection of children in developing countries.

Children are the future and our most precious resource. Yet the statistics on violence against children are alarming. Anywhere between 500 million and 1.5 billion children worldwide endure some form of violence, exploitation or abuse.

You've already heard from many of our partners about the importance of protecting children and youth in developing countries. I am pleased to be here today to provide you with an update on the recent activities of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, or DFATD, in relation to this important issue.

Child protection is one area where Canada's development and foreign policy priorities are mutually reinforcing. I'm speaking today on behalf of the entire department, with support from my colleagues who are here and who can also answer your questions, including our ambassador to the United Nations.

Twenty-five years ago, Canada played an instrumental role in negotiating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada has continued to champion children's rights and child protection ever since.

Securing the future of children and youth is one of five thematic priorities of Canada's international assistance. It sets out three paths for engagement that aim to support children from birth till adulthood: maternal, newborn and child health; access to quality education, especially for girls; and safe and secure futures.

Improving maternal, newborn and child health remains Canada's top development priority. Paramount to securing a safe future for children is protecting their health in the first 1,000 days.

In 2010, Canada led the G8 in launching the Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, which leveraged \$7.3 billion in new funding from the G8.

Last May, Prime Minister Harper brought together eminent global health leaders, including the UN Secretary-General, who were unanimous in their support for accelerating global action on women's and children's health. At the summit, the Prime Minister announced a \$3.5-billion commitment to maternal, newborn and child health from 2015-20.

Canada's leadership has delivered unprecedented results through investments in life-saving efforts to improve the health of mothers and children, in collaboration with our partners.

Canadian partners achieving critical results with support from DFATD include the Micronutrient Initiative, Canada's key nutrition partner. The Micronutrient Initiative ensures that an average of more than 300 million people per year are reached with iodized salt. Iodine is a critical micronutrient for optimal brain development.

Protecting children also means protecting them from leading diseases. Canada's investments have leveraged key partnerships such as with GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, which mobilized \$7.5 billion to vaccinate 300 million children and save up to 6 million lives over the next 5 years. It is these kinds of results that are affirming Canada's position as a leader in maternal, newborn and child health.

[English]

Canada has also partnered with Rotarians, who have given generously to the global effort to eradicate polio through the global polio eradication initiative. This is the single largest, internationally coordinated public health initiative, which has successfully reduced new polio cases by 99%.

As well, UNICEF Canada and the Kiwanis Foundation of Canada will raise funds to be matched by DFATD so that 3.4 million women of reproductive age receive three doses of the tetanus toxoid vaccine to prevent tetanus infection for themselves and their future newborns.

Canada has also extended our commitment to accountability in women's and children's health to global fora. At the invitation of the Secretary-General, Prime Minister Harper has co-led a global initiative to improve accountability for women's and children's health, which has vastly improved the global community's ability to track resources invested and results achieved. Through Canada's leadership and investments in maternal, newborn, and child health, girls and boys are living safer and healthier lives. At the same time, our investments in education and child protection aim to ensure that children not only survive but also thrive.

Education is a key driver for reducing poverty, fostering economic growth, and promoting human development, yet an estimated 57 million girls and boys are not in primary school, about 50% of whom are in conflict-affected and fragile states. Canada has a long-standing commitment to increasing access to quality basic education as the foundation for lifelong learning, employment, and sustainable development.

• (1150)

Getting and keeping girls in school is particularly important. When girls are educated they tend to marry later, have fewer children, provide better health care and nutrition for their families, and earn more income than women with little or no education. Our work in Afghanistan over the past decade has, for example, contributed to the creation of more than 7,200 community-based schools that have provided education to approximately 210,000 students, over 80% of whom are girls.

Canada also works to support safe and secure schools so that every boy and girl can learn and develop without fear of violence, exploitation, or abuse. With Canadian support, Plan International Canada is working in Kenya with the government and directly with children to improve access to safe and high-quality learning environments. We believe that when adults fight, children's

education should not suffer. To that end, Canada has announced \$58 million for the No Lost Generation initiative through UNICEF and its partners. This effort supports Syrian and Iraqi children with the protective environment and learning opportunities they need.

As part of our child protection programming, DFATD supports countries to develop child protection systems that provide for the safety and security of every girl and boy. For example, Canada is proud to support the Together for Girls initiative, which is dedicated to ending violence against children, with a focus on sexual violence against girls. Canada also recently announced support to the special representative of the UN Secretary-General on violence against children. Her work mobilizes political support to maintain momentum around the violence against children agenda. The need to protect children is increased in fragile and conflict-affected states. In 2013 Canada provided support to implement the minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action, which aims to improve the quality, predictability, and accountability of child protection responses in humanitarian situations.

Investments in birth registration also advance child protection. By registering every birth, we can strengthen child protection practices at all levels. When children are registered, it entitles them to services like health and education, and allows them to be traced if they become separated from their families, displaced, or trafficked.

Through our funding investment in the global financing facility, significant additional resources and partnerships will be leveraged to help improve maternal, newborn, and child health, and to strengthen civil registration and vital statistics. This will support countries to have the necessary information to develop strategic and effective policies and programs in child health and to enable children to have a better chance to access their rights and health services.

Canada continues to demonstrate strong leadership in working to end the practice of child, early, and forced marriage, or CEFM. This practice violates girls' human rights, disrupts their education, jeopardizes their health, and makes them more vulnerable to violence. In the last few years, Canada has spearheaded the creation of the International Day of the Girl Child, which was focused on CEFM in its first year. We also championed the first-ever stand-alone resolutions to eliminate child, early, and forced marriage at the UN General Assembly and in the UN Human Rights Council. Building on this success, in the fall of 2014 Canada and Zambia led the most substantive international resolution to date on child, early, and forced marriage. We are proud that the resolution was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly.

We have also intensified programming towards CEFM. Canada is working with such key partners as UNICEF, Care Canada, Save the Children, Plan, and Girls Not Brides to bolster efforts to prevent CEFM and support girls who have already been married. Canada also plays a leadership role on other foreign policy efforts fundamental to child protection. This includes advancing Security Council resolutions on the protection of children in situations of armed conflict and as chair of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict. Canada is working to ensure that the rights of children are central to the sustainable development goals and targets of the new global post-2015 development agenda.

Canada is advocating for child protection to be addressed through the inclusion of measurable goals and targets related to improving maternal, newborn, and child health; eliminating all forms of violence against women and children; empowering women and girls; and eliminating child, early, and forced marriage.

The Government of Canada has also enhanced its capacity to protect Canadian children overseas. This has been done through the creation of a specialized vulnerable children consular unit responsible for cross-border issues that affect Canadian families, such as international parental abduction, forced marriage, and child welfare.

• (1155)

DFATD continues to engage regularly with Canadian civil society and with international organizations, many of which have already appeared before this committee. We are also exploring new ways to engage the private sector. For example, in February 2014, Canada welcomed the children's rights and business principles, which provide a tool to guide businesses on actions they can take to respect and support children's rights in the workplace, marketplace, and community.

In addition, many other federal government departments lead complementary efforts to end violence against children, specifically on issues such as children's rights, human trafficking, child labour, child exploitation, and online sexual abuse, and on women, peace and security.

Making the world safe and secure for girls and boys is something that all countries can achieve together through commitment, compassion, and collaboration. By demonstrating global leadership at home and abroad, Canada is helping to bring about stronger international standards, support, and enforcement that puts children first. Child protection is a fundamental element of achieving global stability, security, and prosperity.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're going to start our first round.

For seven minutes, Mr. Dewar, please.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our guests and to our ambassador in New York.

I want to start with a question. It's very cogent and reflects the failure of the international community, and this isn't to point any fingers at anyone here. It's just that the international community has failed with regard to Syria, as we just found in the reports coming out. The UNICEF figures that were released today estimate that as many 14 million children are now affected by the Syrian crisis. If we go back to 2012 there were about 500,000 Syrian children who were in need of humanitarian aid. That figure is now 7.6 million. Now 14 million children are affected by this crisis. It's four years today since the crisis started in Syria.

We obviously have been doing things, so I want to acknowledge that, but I'm just underlining that the international community has failed drastically.

I want to focus on Lebanon because we now know that one in four in Lebanon are refugees from the crisis.

I just want a very succinct answer on this. Has the government recently funded any child protection initiatives with regard to children in Lebanon?

I'll ask that of anyone of the panellists here.

**Mme Diane Jacovella:** We agree with you on the importance of addressing children in humanitarian situations because often they are neglected. That's why Canada has been one of the first donors to support the No Lost Generation that is actually trying to protect and educate children because as you mentioned, it has been four years. We cannot have a generation of children that haven't been educated and protected.

I will ask Leslie to specifically answer your question on Lebanon.

**Ms. Leslie Norton (Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** Recently, in 2015, I think you know that Minister Paradis announced \$50 million in additional assistance in response to the Syrian crisis. Of that, \$25 million was for inside Syria and \$25 million was for the neighbouring countries. Within that funding there were allocations for key partners like UNHCR and the World Food Programme.

While these might not be perceived as being specific to children, it is really important to note that partners like UNHCR and the World Food Programme have as part of their mandates the protection and assistance of children, and it's also important to note that over 50% of the refugee population is children, *ergo*, the assistance that Canada has provided to UNHCR, the World Food Programme, and UNICEF benefits and meets the needs directly of children.

• (1200)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I just want to underscore the importance of focusing on Lebanon. We have done work with Jordan, and that's good, but I really am imploring that the government turn its attention to what's happening in Lebanon. There are, I believe, requests in to government on what's happening in Lebanon. I can't underscore enough the importance of focusing on Lebanon. It's a very precarious political situation as well as a massive humanitarian disaster.

For our ambassador in New York, I just mentioned the UNICEF numbers. I am concerned about the balance in Canada's aid in terms of how we are distributing aid, as I just mentioned. I wanted to know from you, as the ambassador, being our ear on the ground in New York, what the discussions are. Clearly, it's not just Canada's burden share. This is something we have to share with other member states, responsible member states.

We know there are negotiations ongoing for about a month or so with regard to the sustainable development goals, SDG indicators and looking at the focus of the SDGs. I'm just wondering if you can update us. As part of the negotiations, are you actively focusing on integrating the needs of children from the Canadian point of view in those discussions that have been going on? That's the first question.

Second, what is Canada's interaction with the UNDP with regard to the post-2015 goals?

I have just those two questions. Are you actively engaged on that with regard to advocating for children and youth, and what is our actual interaction on UNDP with regard to post-2015?

Thank you.

**Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski (Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** I can assure you that in the work that our mission is undertaking, as part of the negotiations of the sustainable development agenda, the goals and the targets were part of the open working group discussions that took place over the course of the last year and a half. Now we're moving toward finalization of the goals, targets, and indicators. Canada has been one of the countries insisting that child protection, and particularly targets around children's needs and issues, needs to be an integral part of this framework going forward. We're hopeful that as this moves forward

over the coming months, and ultimately is adopted in September when leaders are here for the general assembly session, that children will be at the centre.

We take the perspective that the future depends on how we protect our children. You noted the issues of Syria, and you know the UNICEF appeal that was launched in January of this year estimates that there are about 62 million kids around the world that are in some sort of humanitarian setting of either conflict or disaster. The appeal is for \$3.1 billion. We're very proud that Canada has always been able to step up to the plate to address those issues. As we create a framework to guide development assistance for the next 15 years our view is that we must have specific targets that allow us to monitor and collect data with respect to the impact of policies and needs of children, so that we can then make the decisions and allocations necessary to be able to—

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you for the answer. I want to affirm then that you have been engaged with UNDP about post-2015. That's what I've heard you say in the past month.

With respect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child there have been some challenges with respect to its implementation. What is Canada doing at your level to encourage implementation, to make sure that this is a solid framework that we're dealing with when we're talking about child protection? Is that something that you've been advocating for and for its implementation?

**Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski:** To the first part of your question I can assure you that with UNDP, UNICEF, and with the other funds and programs, we're there working with them on a daily basis. We sit on the board of UNICEF and have ongoing dialogues with UNDP. We will be on their board next year. Canada is very much at the table from the point of view of policy formulation.

With specific reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, if I had to pick two areas where we've focused it's on children and armed conflict. We are supporting the work of the special representative of the secretary general, Madam Leila Zerrougui, and her work specifically around child soldiers. Canada has put forward a number of initiatives to support her work, particularly in countries such as CAR, South Sudan, and DRC where children are at the centre of those conflicts both as refugees and regrettably as child soldiers. The Children, Not Soldiers campaign that Madam Zerrougui has rolled out since last year is the singular effort of the international community to try to attack the issue of demobilizing children; getting them off the front lines as combatants; and ensuring that they have reintegration and reinsertion opportunities, education, literacy, and economic viability. These are areas where we spend an enormous amount of time. Canada chairs the group of friends of the 38 member states on children and armed conflict network, specifically with that objective.

• (1205)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. That's all the time we have.

Ms. Brown, we'll turn it over to you for seven minutes please.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all of our witnesses who are here. It's nice to have Diane and Leslie back particularly since you've been here for our committee meetings on a regular basis. We had a bit of an update of what's going on in Lebanon. I wonder, Ms. Norton, if you could give us a bit of an update on the situation for children in the wider Middle East conflict so that we have a sense of what's happening there and how we're addressing those needs.

**Ms. Leslie Norton:** I think we can clearly define the Syria crisis and Iraq crisis both together as protection crises. They're crises that affect women and children, and men and boys. We have many protection challenges and one of them primarily is access to many of the very vulnerable people. What we know now is that in the Syrian population the numbers in need are about 12.2 million. It's huge. We also are very cognizant that there are a large number of refugees in the hosting countries, as you're aware.

The UN has recently launched its humanitarian appeals for 2015. Those appeals are the largest ever for the Syrian context. The needs there are about \$7.3 billion to meet humanitarian needs for 2015, and that doesn't include roughly \$2.4 billion, \$2.4 billion for resilience type programming. It is the largest ever appeal for a response. The needs are great and one of the ongoing concerns is going to be to continue to access the people in northern Syria. The UN has really ramped up its cross-border activities to try to make sure they can access those people who are in the hard-to-reach areas. There's a much greater focus now on protection, particularly with regard to sexual and gender-based violence, but also on meeting the education needs of the children across the region through the No Lost Generation initiative. It's really about trying to get children into safe spaces where they can actually feel like children again. It's trying to identify and ensure that unaccompanied minors in fact are accompanied by parents, or family, or adults. It's trying to ensure that there's family reunification for those children. It's also trying to ensure psychosocial support for children who are traumatized.

I always find it very sad when our partners start to look at the generation of activities such as psychosocial support because then you know that you are in a context where it's a protracted crisis. It's not just looking at the primary needs of food, and water, and shelter. It means that you are settling into a longer crisis and the needs evolve. It's currently a very challenging context for humanitarian workers, and especially for the folks who are conflict-affected.

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Can you give us any sense of the number of children who are in school? I'm sure it must be exceedingly difficult to find these safe places that you talk about in order to have the opportunity for education to be presented. Can you give us any numbers?

**Ms. Leslie Norton:** I can't give you those numbers right now. What I will come back to this committee with is the number of children who are in both informal and formal school settings. In this context the majority of children will be in the informal type settings of schooling because the schools have in many contexts been either destroyed or have suffered some sort of damage. Our partners have really tried to take innovative approaches to offering education settings and opportunities not in the formalized school settings.

● (1210)

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Ms. Jacovella, I will turn to you if I may for a moment. You spoke a little bit in your remarks about early and forced marriage. You and I were in Senegal together and we saw that photograph display in the museum about these girls, some of them as young as eight years old. It's interesting we're having this discussion today because Tuesday in the House of Commons we had a debate on sexual violence in the DRC. Today we are addressing a piece of legislation in Canada obviously for barbaric practices and making some changes to criminal court, but we know that early and forced marriage is one of the issues that young girls face globally. Would you like to just comment further for the committee on the initiatives that Canada has taken, and on how can we help?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** It is really appalling when we look at the statistics. We know that, globally, there are about 700 million women alive today who were married as children. According to the UNICEF report, "The State of the World's Children", there are 50 million girls who are married each year, and one in three girls is married before the age of 18.

I think, what we found really compelling is the link between child, early, and forced marriage, and maternal, newborn, and child health. When we look at the complications that occur during pregnancy, we find that the complications for pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death for girls in the developing world, and many of them are married young. Stillbirths and newborn deaths are also much more prevalent among young girls.

We know that if we keep girls in school, we will delay marriage, delay the first pregnancy, and also delay death during childbirth. These are significant things that can be done.

In terms of programming, Canada has worked a lot over the past couple of years to attract attention to this issue, both through the multilateral system and through UN resolutions. Recently, in the fall of 2014, the first substantive resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly, and as I mentioned, it was unanimous. This is something that Canada co-led with Zambia, and we're really proud of that collaboration with Zambia.

What we have found is that, in addition to the multilateral advances to bring attention to the issue, we also need to have targeted programming, so we have started having targeted programming over the last couple of years. What we try to do is prevent the practice of child, early, and forced marriage, but we also help girls who are already married, and make sure to provide them with the support they need.

We work with countries to develop the legislation that is needed. But we know that you can have legislation in place and the practice will still continue, so we also work with communities by empowering them to make the change. It's a complex issue. It's one that involves both our human rights and development approaches, but it is one that is definitely worth continuing to work on.

If any of you have had the privilege of hearing one of those young girls talk about this, it's heartbreaking. In terms of Canadian values, we feel we really need to continue our efforts and redouble what we're doing.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We will move along to Mr. Garneau, for seven minutes.

**M. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you all for your testimony today on a very important subject, the protection of children and youth in developing countries.

My first question is for Ms. Jacovella. You mentioned the government's maternal, newborn, and child health program, which I applaud. It is a considerable undertaking on the part of Canada. What I would like to know specifically, because I'm not 100% clear on it, is whether there any funds provided by Canada for what could be described as family planning, and the provision of safe abortions. Is that something that Canada provides?

My auxiliary question is, do any of the other partners that are also engaged in this activity provide this service?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Yes, Canada has been a leader in maternal, newborn, and child health. In our approach, we have decided to focus on areas that are evidence-based and have the greatest impact. Our work is focused mostly on strengthening the health system and making sure that we have enough health facilities, community health workers, and the systems in place to address the needs of women and children with regard to leading diseases. A lot of our work has been focused on issues such as immunization. We also have a strong focus on nutrition, because 45% of the deaths of children are attributed to nutrition.

Family planning—

• (1215)

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Oh, I'm sorry. You were getting to that.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I just wanted to give you the context for how we've made our decision—

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** I'm familiar with the context. It was a specific question.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** In terms of family planning, we do support initiatives on family planning. We know that family planning helps reduce first pregnancies and helps to space pregnancies, but the Government of Canada has decided to not fund programs that directly support abortions.

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Last year, not all of the government funding that was approved by Parliament was spent in your department. I want to know, with respect to the funding that was supposed to go to the programs in your area of responsibility, whether all of the funding was provided. If it wasn't, do you have an explanation as to why it wasn't?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** The funding we have for maternal, newborn, and child health has all been committed and disbursed as planned. I don't have the numbers for March, but in January we were at 97% of the disbursement for Muskoka. We are on track to fully disburse everything that had been committed in Muskoka by March 31.

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Thank you.

My next question is for the ambassador.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as we all like to say, is the most ratified convention in the history of the United Nations. I'm sure Syria has ratified it. Yet we have some pretty awful situations in the world.

Is it your impression, from where you stand in the United Nations, that the signing and ratifying of this convention for many countries where Canada is involved with maternal and child care is almost meaningless and that it has been totally forgotten, or would you say that despite the challenges ahead of us, this convention has had some benefit over the past 20 years?

**Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski:** I think, Mr. Garneau, that the convention has had an extremely positive effect in terms of underscoring to member states, particularly those in a developing context, the need for them to undertake work to bring forward public policies that really put children at the centre of their agendas, whether it be in the health area or the education area. They understand clearly that their ability to progress as societies is intrinsically linked to their ability to ensure their children have the possibility of a future.

If children are dying under the age of five, they will never have the opportunity to be contributors to their society. The Convention on the Rights of the Child actually was the instrument, if you will, that put the issue that you must put children first, from the point of view of what you're doing in governance no matter what your context is, and that then exhorted countries such as ours and others in the developed world to provide the assistance, expertise, and capacity-building resources so that countries could up their game, as it were.

Certainly from what we see here on a daily basis from countries whose GDP per capita is extremely low is that they are as committed to wanting to do as much as they can for their children as we are. But the fact is that their systems, their programming, the ability to reach people in remote areas where they don't have roads or infrastructure, all work against their ability to deliver the kinds of services Madam Jacovella spoke of on maternal, newborn, and child health.

The sadness of children under five dying is that most of them die from things that are preventable, things such as water and sanitation, and nutritious food that they're not able to get because of where they happen to be or their economic circumstances.

UNICEF today is the UN's brand that is best known and appreciated around the world. I think as a catalyst to putting children at the focal point and really giving UNICEF...the convention certainly has served that purpose and is taken seriously by countries, notwithstanding, perhaps in some cases, very limited abilities to do the kinds of things that they know they ultimately must to ensure their children have a prosperous future possibility.

• (1220)

**Mr. Marc Garneau:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks, Marc.

We're going to start a second round of five minutes, and I'm going to lead off with Mr. Hawn for five minutes.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.



Thank you all for being here.

Ambassador Rishchynski, there's a lot of money, obviously, at play here, and there's always the concern that the money gets to where it's actually supposed to go. What kinds of tracking mechanisms do we have in place to make sure it gets into the right hands, and how successful are we at that? How do we compare with the experience of our partners?

**Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski:** Well, I can tell you that in our own bilateral programming, and Madam Jacovella and Madam Norton can speak to that in much more detail than I, we have very strong monitoring, evaluation, and tracking methodologies that have been in place for a very long time to ensure that our investments are protected and, in fact, the funding that we provide goes to the beneficiaries as per our targeting.

With the UN, certainly over the course of the last decade or 15 years since the millennium development goals were adopted, we've seen UN agencies, in partnership with host governments around the world, really put an emphasis on the need to have accountability and on the need to have data that actually demonstrates where money is going and to the benefit of whom. When I sit with countries here like Tanzania or Zambia I can see that they are now in a position where they are able to shift resources to other areas of need because they're in a much better position to understand the gaps.

As we begin now to negotiate and finalize the post-2015 development framework, the requirements of monitoring and tracking have to be at the centre of the agenda, so that we are able to disaggregate data and ensure that the money is actually going to those segments of populations with the greatest need in a specific area. In fact, this is part of the discussion now in terms of how we set up the indicator frameworks that will allow us to do this on a fulsome basis as the program rolls out subsequent to adoption in September of this year.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn:** Ms. Jacovella, can you talk a little bit about the type of support that we give to a girl we're rescuing from a child, early, and forced marriage and the kind of resistance and how you overcome that?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Our programming works with community-based organizations and with developing countries. With developing countries, it helps them develop the systems in place, the child protection system, that will find those girls, help give them counselling, and help them adapt to the situation. We also work with some community-based organizations, some of our Canadian NGOs that are quite active, and organizations like Girls Not Brides, that try to actually work with the parents so the situation doesn't happen. We really try to focus on the prevention and then in the future, addressing situations.

In terms of the humanitarian situation, one of the issues we have seen is that often those girls are alone and the parents sometimes think it's safer for them to get married than to be alone. So we also try to work with the community and with some of our multilateral partners, as Ms. Norton mentioned, like UNHCR, to make sure that when they look at new refugees, when they look at this base population, they address those issues.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn:** Ambassador Rishchynski, in the global community we have been working in conflict areas for a very long

time, and that probably won't go away anytime soon. Have we learned any lessons that we're applying now? Is history just repeating itself? Are we getting any better at dealing with Syria and Iraq and places like that? When that pops up, do we say we know we can start at least a couple of steps ahead of where we may have started for the last one?

**Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski:** I'd like to think that we are, Mr. Hawn, but the sad reality is that in countries where conflict exists today, 50% of those countries, after they have achieved some level of truce or peace, will actually revert back into conflict over the medium term. The problem is a lack of institutions that can really sustain the kind of constructive peace building, peace consolidation, to allow countries to really move and for populations to see that they are going forward in post-conflict environments.

The peace-building architecture of the UN that was adopted in 2005 really sought to put a focus globally, among international financial institutions and donors, on the need to create resilient institutions in post-conflict settings that would allow the roots to take hold in a society that would then mitigate a potential return to conflict. Look at a place like South Sudan, look at a place like DRC. It's extremely difficult.

There are other examples in the world where we have seen countries move out of conflict, begin to consolidate gains, and if the population and good governance can then be brought in behind this, actually move and get to a different place. Countries like Mozambique, Angola, even Sierra Leone in West Africa, I think, are positive examples, but the fragility of these contexts is such that it doesn't take very much to tilt them back. That is the great sadness and that's the reason we have to keep working as we do.

●(1225)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hawn.

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

I'm going to turn it over to you, Mr. Saganash, for five minutes, sir.

[Translation]

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank Ms. Jacovella for her clear and concise presentation.

I would like to begin with a question for Ms. Bedlington.

In a former life, before becoming a member of Parliament, I was in charge of international relations for an organization called the Grand Council of the Crees. So I'm quite familiar with the process surrounding the periodic reports that countries have to submit. Member states have to submit reports pursuant to the covenants on civil and political rights, and on economic, social and cultural rights, in relation to the declaration of human rights.

The human rights committee often highlights the challenges indigenous peoples face in various developing countries.

As the director of the Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs Policy Division, what would you say are the specific challenges faced by indigenous children in developing countries? I'm not sure whether you can speak to that or not.

Afterwards, I will have a question for Ms. Norton.

**Ms. Rachael Bedlington (Director, Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs Policy Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade):** Thank you very much for your question.

[English]

Certainly, there's just no question that the challenges for indigenous children globally are profound, I would say, and they are something that Canada takes very seriously in our international engagement as we go about promoting the rights of indigenous people globally.

There is a strong partnership of countries around the world that look at these issues and participate in a range of fora to try to make progress in those areas. There, I think about just last September and the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, which covered a wide range of subjects, and certainly the rights of indigenous children are very key amongst those.

In terms of the challenges, I would say that the challenges faced by indigenous children globally are the same as those faced by children globally. Then maybe there's another layer on top of that, when you think about different national situations and, in some instances, lack of structures, lack of policies, and a lack of attention devoted to the special circumstances they face. Certainly, that is an area that we put time and attention into and that we work very hard on with international partners to try to make progress.

[Translation]

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Thank you for your answer. I completely agree with you.

Since the last time department officials appeared before the committee, on January 27, if I'm not mistaken, has any additional funding been allocated to deliver psychosocial support in countries such as Iraq, Syria and Lebanon?

• (1230)

**Ms. Leslie Norton:** We were here on January 27 to discuss Syria and Iraq. I assume that is the meeting you are referring to. I can tell you that, since then, no additional humanitarian funding has been allocated to that end.

[English]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Saganash.

We're going to move over to Mr. Trottier for one.

I'm sorry. Did you want a chance to reply?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** Could we hear the answer from this side?

[Translation]

**Ms. Rachael Bedlington:** Briefly, if I may, I would add this.

[English]

I'll just say that I'm not sure when the last committee hearing was that you were referring to. But let me say that in October of 2014 there was an announcement by our then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister Baird, putting forward a commitment by Canada of \$10 million that would go specifically to women and children affected by ISIL, specifically in the realm of sexual violence. That was meant to include children in Iraq, children in Syria, and refugee populations that have been created by that whole chain of events, and certainly part of that was psychosocial support. That is a new amount of money devoted to that issue.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Trottier, sir, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today.

I want to dig down a bit on a topic that came up in the presentation about birth registration and the necessity of getting some basic information about every person who's born. Clearly in some countries there are challenges with children being separated from their families. There are the opportunities for displacement and trafficking. What does birth registration look like in certain countries? Can you paint a picture? There have to be some systems behind it. Does that involve any biometric identification in cases like fingerprints or even DNA? In the case where there'd be children separated from their families, how could our systems help reunite families?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** The issue of civil registration and vital statistics, CRVS, is really critical. In the Commission on Information and Accountability that was co-chaired by President Kikwete of Tanzania and Prime Minister Harper, that was one of the key recommendations, and it was a bit forgotten because nobody was paying attention. I guess it doesn't have as much appeal as other things because you're talking about building information systems, but it is really critical. Developing countries need to develop a program, need to make decisions about how much of their budget they'll allocate to different areas such as health or education or economic growth. When they don't know how many kids are born, how many people are dying, and what they're dying of, it's difficult to have actual, real planning to know if you're making a difference.

People have tackled CRVS a lot in the area of maternal, newborn, and child health, saying that every child should be registered. It's a right. It's linked to whether they will have access to services, whether we will know what age they are getting married, whether they can go to school, all those kinds of things. We look at it from a development perspective, but also from a human rights perspective. It's a right.

The systems in place are very, very basic. There are over 100 developing countries that lack a well-functioning CRVS system. We're saying that approximately 40 million, an estimated one-third of the world's births, are not registered; and two-thirds of deaths, 40 million again, are not legally recognized as well. It's significant in terms of impact.

We are working with a number of partners to try to address it in a number of different ways. When we work with the Gavi Alliance, when people come for vaccinations, we would like a way of linking that vaccination to the birth registration, to the national system. I think our biggest achievement was last September, when we had, at the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister Harper, the president of the World Bank, the Prime Minister of Norway, and the head of USAID at the time, agree to launch the global financing facility for women and children. Canada committed \$200 million, \$100 million specifically to address the CRVS system. We are trying to leverage the funding from the World Bank. The president of the World Bank is saying at some point we could leverage up to 4:1 to help developing countries actually put the system in place. We're trying to work with all the partners together to advance this in a coordinated way, so we don't have five different systems that don't speak to each other.

•(1235)

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** Okay.

When you say it's very basic, what would be the gaps between a birth registration here in Canada or in developed countries versus what you're seeing in the countries that we're dealing with?

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** It's quite incredible when you go to some of these health clinics in some of the developing countries. Sometimes it's a little book that community health workers write the information in; sometimes there's nothing at all. And some of it is a little bit more sophisticated; they register the child by mobile technology. It really varies from country to country.

**Mr. Bernard Trottier:** You also mentioned in your remarks the initiative with Rotary for the eradication of polio. Many of us in our communities have worked with Rotary on some fundraising initiatives. I think one of the reasons that it's been so successful is because it's a fairly narrowly focused program, with a clear objective. The objective is the complete eradication of polio. It's really energized Rotarians. It's also energized donors, because they know it's something that's achievable and doable. One of the challenges, I suppose, with maternal and newborn health is that it's vast. It's hard to really put your finger on what the actual target is at any one time.

Is there a challenge when it comes to leveraging, compared to, say, the program with Rotary, for the eradication of polio? So much of that is voluntary contributions from members of society, and in this larger, vaster program we're looking at billions of dollars at the macro level. Are there private individuals, volunteer organizations, that are stepping up and leveraging the government contributions?

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have, but we'll have a quick response.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** I would like to say that the global polio eradication initiative is a great partnership with a number of players. WHO and UNICEF are key partners. The Gates Foundation is a strong contributor. It has been able to rally many people together. The Rotarians were a great example. They were very successful in Canada, but they are also very successful internationally.

One of their concerns is people are forgetting what polio looked like. It's easy to forget it. One of the issues now is often the safety of

polio workers. We have seen cases in some places in Nigeria or Pakistan. We're now trying to tackle the most difficult areas.

The last thing I want to say is that a lot of the polio workers, and the network that had been created for this, have been extremely useful for Ebola to make sure the health system is also able to address issues like this. We've seen in West Africa how they have been able to use that network.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Brown, for five minutes.

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Thank you very much, Chair.

Ms. Jacovella, in your remarks you talked a bit about the vulnerable children's consular unit.

I wonder if you could give the committee a bit more information on that. What is its mandate? Are we unique in having something like this, or are some of our allied countries doing the same thing? Where is it?

The reason I ask particularly is I had a situation in my own riding where two children were taken across international borders by their mother. I know there is a court case. I know that is another issue that probably rests more with consular services than anything else.

I wonder if you could give us a bit more of a picture on what this agency looks like and what its mandate is.

**Ms. Diane Jacovella:** It was set up because we realized, as you mentioned, often there are a lot of cases of Canadians who have difficulty in dealing with this. This is a small unit that is trying to be a bit of a match.

I'll turn to Rachael who is our expert in this area.

**Ms. Rachael Bedlington:** Thanks very much.

This is an innovative move by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. It's a unit that's set up within our ministry. I think it was created in recognition of situations out there that are challenging and particularly affect children; if we talk about abductions, if we talk about families who exist between two countries, if we talk about instances to do with taking children overseas for the purposes of marriage or tied to FGM, female genital mutilation, for example.

There are all kinds of situations that are challenging for consular officials to deal with. A decision was taken to look at this in a very concentrated way, to put resources in to develop a capacity within our foreign ministry, and to have policies that would respond to some of these challenging issues.

In terms of what others are doing, I believe the U.K. might have something similar. Of course, there's always a dialogue back and forth to try and find best practices, to try and do the best we can to help Canadian children, because that's what the consular service is there for when they are faced with some of these very challenging issues.

• (1240)

**Ms. Lois Brown:** We know one of the issues, and I would expect this falls under their mandate for Canadian children. One of the areas we know is of considerably difficulty in the world is the whole issue of human trafficking. Children are the ones who are the most vulnerable in situations like that, first of all because they don't have the resources. Nor in many cases do they have the ability to connect with anybody who can remove them from those situations.

Is there any mandate within your office to work on those initiatives, or does the department have any other initiatives on human trafficking?

**Ms. Rachael Bedlington:** Human trafficking is an area of great concern. Canada is signed up to a number of action plans with regard to how to tackle human trafficking. Everybody who is trafficked is vulnerable, but if you think about children then we're talking about extreme circumstances.

Yes, it's something the department works with in concert with others across government. It's not just an effort led by our ministry at all; it is something that the consular unit I mentioned would be working to assist with, but it's broader than that. There are action plans in place to try and tackle it from a Canadian perspective and as it affects Canadian citizens.

**Ms. Julie Shouldice (Director, Education, Child Protection and Gender Equality, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development):** As Ms. Bedlington mentioned, there is a national action plan to combat human trafficking. It was put in place in June 2012. The lead is with Public Safety, but our department is looking at this from an international perspective.

There is certain funding that we provide to help other countries deal with trafficking issues. We've done some work in Latin America dealing with child sex tourism in Costa Rica and victims of commercial sexual exploitation, both on the prevention aspects, and then on helping victims and doing some of the tracing, reunification, and psychosocial support afterwards.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Dewar, you have five minutes.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a comment regarding registration. That was a really good question from my colleague across the way. We've heard about it before. I think digital is a huge opportunity, having just talked to someone who had been working with the World Bank on this. We haven't tapped that technology enough. It's incredible how connected cellphone technology is in these areas. I think it would be really important to pursue those opportunities, not just in registration but in so many other areas.

My questions are for our ambassador.

One of the most disturbing features of conflicts, be they in Syria or the DRC, which we were just debating, is the extension of the violence and abuse in these conflicts to children. You referenced child soldiers earlier, but it also includes the torture of children. I'm wondering if you could tell the committee what the government's position is on the optional protocol to the convention on torture.

My second question is on what you spoke about earlier, on efforts to advance the interests of children in the UN negotiations for the SDGs.

By the way, it's really good to see you. I don't think we have invited you to committee at all, so I'm going to take advantage of this.

What intelligence have you found regarding the main institutional or diplomatic barriers when advancing the interests of children in the UN negotiations—just on the optional protocol and the intelligence that you can share with us?

What are those barriers you're facing when you're trying to push things through at the UN in regard to the interests of children?

• (1245)

**Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski:** In response to the latter part of your question, Mr. Dewar, I think that there's reticence in many quarters amongst member states to take on commitments for which they know that their capacity and financial wherewithal to be able to deliver what's being asked is just not there. If you're representing a country that has very limited instances to be able to invest in basic services.... Many countries, some 40% of the world, don't even have water and sanitation.

When we start looking at specific initiatives around child protection, it's not that there's a reticence personally or emotionally to not want to stand up, the problem is if we do that what do we have to stop doing because we don't have the resources?

The key discussion right now around the post-2015 development agenda is a recognition that domestic resource mobilization, people paying their taxes, is going to have to be a critical element in giving countries the ability to invest their own funds in addition to what might come from official development assistance, from private investment, and from philanthropic organizations. The scale of the needs that exist in a world with seven billion people that will grow to nine billion by 2040 simply outstrips what we as donors can provide. We're now a drop in the ocean, we're 15% of the total financial need that's out there.

While people are motivated by a desire to do what is right and what is best for their populations they are constrained by the financial realities and the enormity of the challenges that they face. And because everything is required, particularly if you're coming out from a conflict situation, which so much of the world is, they don't know where to start.

The UN, to its credit, has really raised its game from the point of view of working with them to prioritize the areas of immediacy. They can in essence divide the labour with partners and then be able to build incrementally over time, but more importantly track the progress and move resources around to meet critical gaps that may arise. It's not a perfect system but I think we're much better today than we were before the adoption of the millennium development goals in being able to do that.

Why are children so wound up in conflict as victims? It's simply because they are the most vulnerable. In every conflict situation it is women and children who suffer the most. They do so because they do not have the same inherent abilities, if you will, in terms of where they can go for refuge, and in conflict situations they are reduced almost to an act of survival.

For children it becomes something even more grotesque, if one can use that term, because if they lose a parent and are utterly disconnected then from any kind of sociological system that they're connected with, then they become that much more susceptible to abuse and victimization from those who hold power. Why does a child pick up a gun? It's because that gun gives that child the feeling that they are empowered at some level to be able to deal with the realities of violence that may exist in their society.

These are intractable problems. We're doing better at being able to address them but there are days when you wonder whether we are doing enough from the point of view of the growth of this phenomenon, as so much of the world becomes consumed by conflict.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** The time has run out for me.

Do you have an answer to the question on the government's position on the optional protocol to the convention against torture?

**Mr. Guillermo Rishchynski:** I think Ms. Bedlington may be in a better position to answer in terms of the official position, but from our perspective here and the perspective of our High Commissioner for Human Rights council in Geneva, torture is an issue that we take extremely seriously around the world and Canada's voice is heard in denunciation of those instances whenever necessary.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you.

It's good to have you here.

**The Chair:** Thanks.

Do you have a quick response?

● (1250)

**Ms. Rachael Bedlington:** Let me try to make this a concise response.

As you know, Canada is a party to the seven core human rights treaties. Time doesn't allow me to run through them all, but certainly the convention against torture obviously is right up there and, as Ambassador Rishchynski said, we've got a very clear commitment when it comes to where we stand in seeing that torture is not present.

When it comes to the optional protocol, I think the one that you're referring to has to do with oversight of detention facilities, and at this stage we don't have any plans to join that optional protocol. We believe that obviously there's a great deal of importance that should be placed on independent oversight of the conditions in places of detention, but Canada has robust mechanisms to do that and so that would be my response to your question.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We need to suspend. That's all the time we have. We have to do a little committee business.

I want to thank all of our guests for being here today and certainly our ambassador from New York. I'll reiterate Mr. Dewar's words, it's great to have you here with us. It's the first time we've had you here, so that's great.

To all the rest of you, thanks you very much.

Let's suspend for a couple minutes to go in camera.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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